THE JUNIOR BOOKSHELF

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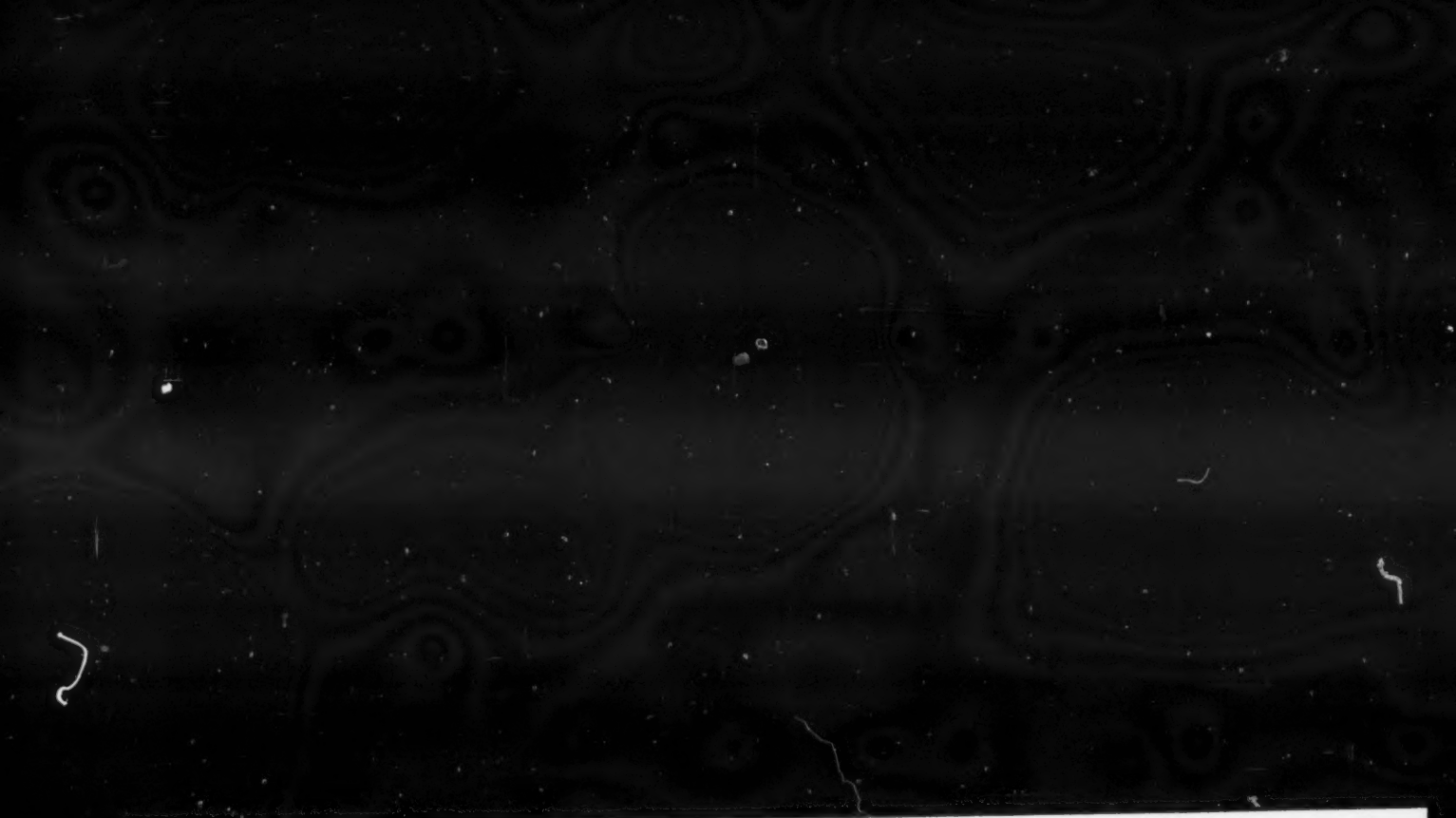

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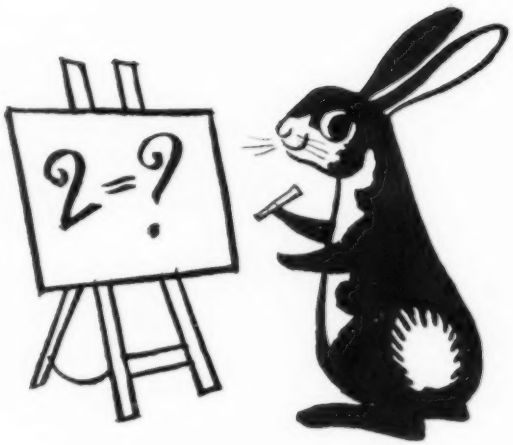

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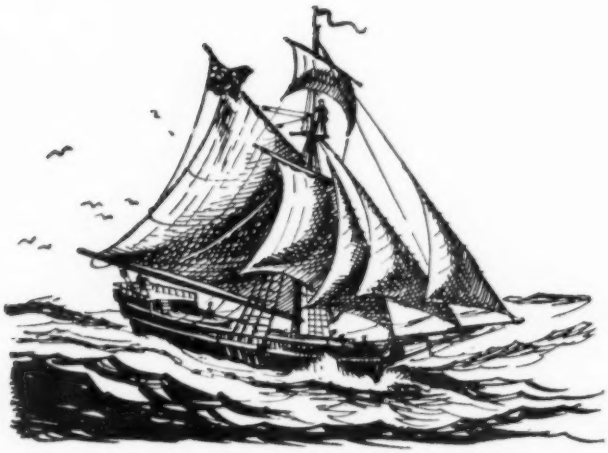

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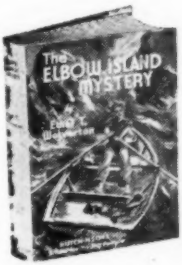

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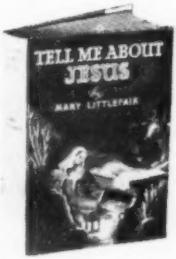

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What Should Our Children Read? a young reader's pilgrimage.

By L. M. RAE.

AT a recent literary luncheon, the topic of the day — in view of the baleful influence of the "Horror Comics" — was, "What should our Children Read?"

The question set one listener thinking of the books that had given delight to a small girl whose childhood was spent in the last years of Queen Victoria's reign. She hesitates to use the word 'Classics' for those old favourites, for there are some who

believe that good books are often ruined for young readers by calling them classics. But after all, is not a classic simply a book that enthusiastic readers pass on from one generation to another? Such is certainly the true definition in the case of the best stories for children's reading. Classics or no, from contacts with the children of today, both boys and girls, this listener finds that her old favourites still have potent power not only to capture the imagination of the new generation but to hold it enthralled. She would therefore pass them on as suggestions to those who seek an answer to this burning question.

Although of yester-year, these books can all be obtained from the booksellers of today in bright new bindings, clear print, and charmingly illustrated. They can also be found on the shelves of the Public Libraries throughout the three kingdoms.

Mr. Paul Gallico, at a discussion on children's reading, recently declared that as an antidote to the "horror comics," he believed in letting children have a ticket for the free library and leaving them alone to exercise their natural instinct for a good storyteller.

Such was the good fortune of our young reader. No learned society ever sat to consider what books she should read, nor had she any pilot to guide her through the vast uncharted sea of literature. She steered her own course as fancy, or, more often, circumstance prescribed, and on her voyage found golden treasure.

It was her happy fate to spend her childhood in a city rich in libraries. When about the age of nine, a Reader's Ticket for the Juvenile Department of the Public Library was procured for her, and she was initiated into the mysteries of the Catalogue and the

cases of little red and blue tickets which in those days indicated whether a book was IN or OUT. A tiresome proceeding, enough to daunt the spirit of all but those of voracious appetite. Happy the children of today who have open access to the bookshelves and can pick and choose for themselves!

With some help from an elder sister, our young reader borrowed her first book —*The Tapestry Room* by Mrs. Molesworth, a delightful writer for children not yet in their teens. *Carrots, The Cuckoo Clock,* and many others from the same pen followed.

Mrs. Molesworth was one of the most widely read writers for children of her time. Although born in 1839, and dying in 1924, no writer for children was, or indeed still is, so inside the world of a young child's imagination. She had made the discovery that fairy tales must have all the reality and the familiar settings of real life but none of its dullness. Her books were usually illustrated by Walter Crane, chief of the illustrators of those late Victorian days, which added greatly to their charm and interest. His pictures were always characteristic and boldly decorative. They could be recognised at once as his even without the ingenius signature — intriguing to a child — a long-legged, long-necked crane, flanked by two V's to form his initial and encircled by a C.

It has been said that "all manner of passionate readers are a species apart, finding their sustenance in the printed word as plants imbibe air." Such was our young reader. From that day forwards when she borrowed her first book, she became a devotee of the Public Library. Neither Catalogues, red and blue indicators, nor the problem of "what to read" ever presented the least difficulty.

She was never directed to read any special book, whether on the bookshelves at home or from the Library, nor was she ever told to abstain from any. Occasionally her elders would glance at the book she read, but the sole comment, not seldom expressed, was "Trash! Read something better! Read good English — good Literature!" Excellent advice for every reader! But a babe must be fed on milk and water before it can digest more solid food. Even "trash," not Comic strips that contain no sustenance whatever either for the mind or the eye, but the Christmas Annuals and School stories that often come in for harsh criticism, serves a purpose. It helps to nourish the seed of passionate reading until it becomes more discriminating and fastidious.

To form a taste for good literature, being the only direction ever given to our young reader, she set forth on her voyage of discovery, guided only by her own fancy. This, it may be of interest to the adult inquirer, led her first to the realm of fairy tale. Although at an earlier age, before she could read for herself, she had fled in terror from the reading aloud of *Jack the Giant-Killer, Bluebeard, Hansel and Gretel,* from the age of nine to ten years, she fell with avidity on Hans Andersen and Andrew Lang's various collections, and heartily enjoyed the most grisly tales of witches and ogres and wicked step-mothers, devouring every book of fairy tale or legend that came her way, as well as such classics as *Reynard the Fox,* George Macdonald's *Princess and the Goblins* and *Back of the North Wind,* Kingsley's *Heroes,* Thackeray's *Rose and the Ring,* also Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare.* For *Alice in Wonderland,* curiously enough she had no liking until much later, nor for the *Pilgrim's Progress.* But Bunyan's *Holy War* and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* were

prime favourites more for the sake, it must be owned, of their impressive illustrations — reproductions of old wood-cuts — than possibly their subject matter, though the military phraseology of the *Holy War* held for her immense fascination.

About the age of ten years, our passionate reader began to find that she craved for something belonging more to the everyday world in which she lived — a world devoid of giants, fairy godmothers, and birds, beasts and fishes ready with advice in dilemmas. It was at this period she took to what her elders termed "trash." It emanated chiefly from between the brightly-coloured boards of Christmas Annuals, or from such magazines as *The Boy's Own Paper*. Many of these stories were excellent, especially those with an historical setting covering various periods. If not great literature, they helped to create in her a taste for history and historical fiction which never palled and invariably sent her to look up an encyclopaedia, and even the works of learned historians to discover what was fact and what was fiction. Whole epochs of history were thus studied, from the days of Nero and the Early Christians in Rome, to the French Revolution, from the days of Clive in India to the Indian Mutiny and the Crimean War, by such writers as G. A. Henty, and R. M. Ballantyne, whose tales of adventure, even in these days of air travel and space fiction, still captivate boyish hearts as well as their sisters'.

But much of our heroine's reading at this time was culled from what some might be prepared to number among the classics of English Literature. She had a somewhat covert liking for *Ministering Children*, beloved of an earlier generation than her own, also for Mrs. Sherwood's *Fairchild Family*, derided by her contemporaries. The sins and shortcomings of that

estimable family, who addressed their parents so politely as "Ma'am" and "Sir" in the fashion of their day, yet behaved so evilly behind their backs, were delightfully shocking to her. And as to the punishments meted out by those well-intentioned parents — a visit to the gallows at the crossroads where a corpse hung rotting, to punish the theft of sugar — (or was it damsons?), could anything have been more tickling to the sensations of a child of a period that had not experienced the horrors of two World Wars?

Then there were Julia Horatio Ewing's hauntingly beautiful *Jacknapes,* a story of the time of Waterloo : *The Story of a Short Life* : *Jan of the Windmill* : *The Peace Egg* : and many others, all much beloved, by the same authoress. Some say they are too pathetic to be good for children. On the other hand, a child of today, aged six, or seven, bred on Horror Comics, was recently heard to declare that the comics he liked best were those with corpses and human torture! Better surely wholesome pathos inducing tears! Was it not Wordsworth who said that the function of Tragedy was to purge the emotions? There were also the charming stories of Mrs. Hodgson Burnett — *Little Lord Fauntleroy* : *Sarah Crewe* : *Editha's Burglar* : *The Captain's Youngest.* Although Little Lord Fauntleroy with his long golden curls and black velvet suit seems to have become something of a figure of fun to sophisticated adults of today, happily there are still little girls as ready to "fall" for him as there were fifty years ago!

The much loved *Black Beauty* must have special mention, even though today horse-drawn vehicles are rarely seen, and red-nosed cabbies perched on their high box seats, and their patient horses, no longer have to wait on wintry nights to take young ladies home

from dances in the small hours. To all lovers of animals, especially horses, *Black Beauty* can never pall. The stories of Mrs. L. T. Meade, especially the charming *Angel of Love,* and Mrs. O. F. Walton's *Peep Behind the Scenes,* must not be omitted from the list of old favourites. Among them must also be included the American writer Louisa Alcott's delightful *Little Women,* along with the various sequels, *Little Men* and *Little Women Married.* Who in the Old World or the New does not count the four girls of the March family among their most dear and intimate friends?

But perhaps most loved of all in our pilgrim's reading was *The Swiss Family Robinson,* that still fascinates the new generation of today. The practical ingenuity of that wonderful family in adapting the products of the desert island to their needs was a constant joy and stimulus, not only to the staging of "Let's pretend" games, but to actual creative invention.

From eleven to twelve and thirteen years, historical tales filled the young reader's horizon and provided a very comprehensive survey of European history. Most memorable among those tales were Charlotte Yonge's *Unknown to History,* (period of Mary Queen of Scots), *The Chaplet of Pearls,* (French, the time of the Huguenots), *The Dove in the Eagle's Nest,* (Germany, Middle Ages) and *The Little Duke,* (the Norman period in England).

The Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family by Mrs. Charles, must have special mention, being one of the best and most comprehensive accounts ever written of Martin Luther and the Reformation in Germany, worthy of taking an even higher place than that accorded to the new American biography of Luther *Here I Stand*, and far above the somewhat scrappy film version, *Martin Luther.* There were also a host

of other historical tales, too numerous to mention by name, by Bulwer Lytton, Whyte Melville, G. A. Henty, that can still be obtained from any Public Library throughout the Kingdom.

At the age of twelve, a new vista of life was opened up for the passionate reader. Happening to see one of her schoolmates absorbed in a book, she remarked "How can you read a book with such small print and no pictures?" She had at the time a preference for clear print and plenty of illustration. The only answer was an impatient "Don't speak to me! If you were as keen on it as I am, you wouldn't mind the print." Silenced, our friend took a look at the title. It was *John Halifax, Gentleman,* by Dinah Muloch, Mrs. Craik. She had seen that book on a shelf at home, a shabby volume in very small print. Home she went hot-foot, and took it from the book-shelf to become as enthralled as her schoolmate. A new world opened out before her with heights and depths she had not dreamed of. She had read her first novel.

A period followed that probably fell into the category of "Trash" — novels of forgotten titles and authors. With winged feet she sped almost daily to change her book at the Public Library. A little later, however, she was introduced to *The Newcomes,* a joy never to be forgotten. The last page was no sooner reached than the first was begun again. This was almost immediately followed by Tennyson's *Idylls of the King.* For weeks and months she dwelt as in a dream, "mystic, wonderful," at Camelot.

Having thus found her way into the realm that held the glorious company of the Immortals, she went adventuring in, eager-eyed, to make acquaintance with all the giants of English Literature.

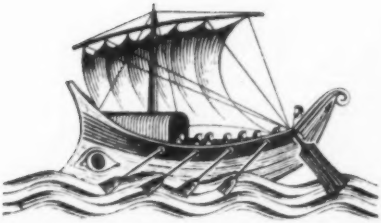

Illustration by G. Fraser from *The Realms of Gold* (U.L.P).

Lucy Evelyn Cheesman

By D. WESTHEAD.

FOR six years Miss Cheesman was Curator of Insects to the Zoological Society of London, but much of her life has been spent on various expeditions — mainly to the South Seas — studying the fauna and flora there, and collecting many of these treasures for such museums as the Natural History Museum of South Kensington. The purpose of such expeditions is necessarily scientific, but adventure soon follows for the enthusiastic and energetic collector.

Investigating new territory means greater opportunity for making new discoveries, and filling in gaps in the collections already in the museums. It also means that the collector must be prepared to be an explorer and a pioneer. Travel into the unknown is often fraught with danger. Small wonder then, that with such a background, Miss Cheesman is such an exciting and convincing writer.

Two straightforward accounts of expeditions to the islands of New Guinea and the New Hebrides are given in *Camping adventures in New Guinea* and *Camping adventures on Cannibal Islands*.

She details the plans which have to be made for camps which will be far away from the white people of the coast and their supplies, and for excursions into territory which may prove to be unfriendly. The latter she treats in a commonsense way, taking no unnecessary risks, but not worrying unduly about events that may never happen. Always, she is intent upon the important concern — collecting. In the course of explaining her work, she describes in detail many of her methods, such as how different types of insects are caught, and how they are preserved for transportation to England. The forest scenery and the living creatures who make it their home are depicted with accuracy and appreciation. In passing, she often explains the reason for natural phenomena, e.g. the chopper shaped bill of the hornbill is used for tearing up rotten logs in order to find a favourite food — the big white beetle grubs. Miss Cheesman also uses her well developed powers of observation to give friendly and sympathetic portraits of the native boys who work for her, and of the inhabitants of the villages which they visit. The idiosyncracies of a simple people are set forth with a kindly humour. Native superstitions are narrated with a real understanding of the often awe-inspiring sights and sounds which, without any scientific explanation, can be so terrifying, and with a real insight into the natives' mental attitude.

Camping and adventure are wonderful ingredients for an exciting tale, and Miss Cheesman makes good use of them in her story *Marooned in Du-Bu Cove*. Once more the setting is New Guinea, but this time the adventures are imaginary, and they are happening to three children of 12 and 14 years of age, and an older youth, Boom, whose age and nationality are never specifically mentioned.

The children decide to stage a mock shipwreck near to a small island, and then see if they can fend for themselves. Instead, they are marooned in earnest for 16 days in a cove that does not offer much hope for a speedy return home, although they soon find it can be made into a pleasant temporary home.

Because Miss Cheesman writes from her own experiences, the incidents and discoveries, particularly of food and materials for shelter, are always credible. Neither does she make the children too independent or clever. Although they are quick and resourceful, it is largely from Boom's stock of native lore that they first learn the right plants to choose, and the right way to set about building, and making themselves comfortable. The difficulties of walking far through the strong and lavish undergrowth of tropical countries are well shown, but the beauty that such scenery offers is also introduced.

The children's father is well characterised, and he and his wife are presented as very real people, loved and admired by their children. One must admire, however, the way in which the author disposes of the parents, a desirable step to create the true "Robinson Crusoe" atmosphere. The mother is in hospital — a temporary absence only. The father has every intention of following the children to their Island after his day's work is finished, but, soon after the children set out, a terrible squall or "guba" sweeps the children well off their track. When their canoe is driven on to a reef, they are only too thankful to set foot on apparently unsatisfactory rocks. After the initial shock, the children begin to enjoy their new mode of life, but they are eager from the start to find a way home. This only comes about by real effort and perseverance, hastened at the end by a devoted servant's keen eyesight.

The desert island theme is used again in *Landfall the unknown,* but this is based on actual records. It is 1788, and the convict settlements and new colonies of Australia are being established. Nearby islands are being discovered, and explored as possible future colonies or calling places for ships to obtain water. During one of these explorations, a party land on Lord Howe Island, 436 miles from Sydney. They are forced to leave hurriedly because of the possibility of a sudden squall, and in the confusion, four of the party are left behind, and they are not rescued for 14 months.

The new islanders consist of a botanist and his 12 year old daughter, and two boys, one a native of the Fennlands, and very capable with his hands. The author generally endows at least some of her characters with knowledge that can be used or adapted when the occasion demands. Familiar plants are recognised ; new plants are tested ; and their whole island life is painstakingly described. The sudden appearance of a madman on the island introduces a dramatic note into their fairly tranquil existence, but the story as a whole is not so exciting as *Marooned in Du-Bu Cove.* It is nevertheless, also interesting for its picture of the early days of colonisation, and for its account of the sailing difficulties of those early days.

The hardships and monotony of sea voyaging, again at the end of the 18th century, are well brought out in another story, also based on actual records, with the arresting title of *Sealskins for silk.* This is mainly the account of Captain Edmund Fanning's 2 year voyage round the world in the brig Betsy, in the years 1797-1798. Fanning wished to trade the seal-skins of the Pacific for the silk of China. Miss Cheesman's first hand knowledge of islands in the Pacific tells in her vivid descriptions of incidents during Fanning's

attempts to find fresh watering places. As the brig reaches China, a clear account is given of Chinese life, especially of the people who live by, or on, the water.

The author has made imaginative use of the scanty details of Fanning's childhood, and has used this period of his life to stress how obsessed he was with a love of the sea from early days. Her account of this not so well known world voyager could, however, be interesting just as a contribution to the literature of exploration and discovery, without the introduction of too much imaginative material. But perhaps a boy would be more able to associate himself with Captain Fanning because the hero is first introduced as a young boy.

It is not surprising to find at least one book by this author wholly devoted to insects, their adaptability and organisation, their highly developed senses and instincts, and their protective devices. *Insects indomitable* is a worthy title for an excellent account of the activities of these creatures, which is extremely interesting even to the general reader. Her explanatory technique is very good, and the illustrations complement the text admirably. Personal reminiscences of insects "in action" give added pleasure to the reader, and one can sense Miss Cheesman's affection for insects even when they exasperatingly picked on her belongings, and even her person, in order to carry on their work. An index, using popular names, completes the book.

Patience, and accurate observation, are necessary characteristics of a scientist, but it is also necessary that deductions be made from the knowledge thus gained, and theories be advanced if scientific thought and method is to progress. It was very natural that the subject of Miss Cheesman's biography should be Charles Darwin — one of the most valued contributors

to scientific method and knowledge. His ideas were mainly surmised from his own systematic and truthful observations. Darwin's personal character and relationships are excellently portrayed. His diffidence and his passion for truth, his relief and pleasure when his friends thought well of his work, his consideration for others, and the enquiring mind which led to observations so startling at the time, are some of the facets of this great man's life as presented by a fellow scientist.

The life of a thinker may not be a child's first choice of reading, but it is as well that he should be reminded occasionally that brave deeds and stalwart physiques are not the only causes for admiration and hero worship. To a child who is not altogether happy at school, the account of Darwin's schooldays may give some encouragement.

Apart from the Penguin book *Landfall the unknown,* which has only two maps, all the books are well illustrated. Although five different artists have been used, all the drawings are detailed and really explanatory, and add much to the usefulness and attractiveness of the books.

Miss Cheesman usually writes from the experiences of her own very interesting life, and her books are always enjoyable, providing entertainment of a high order, and plenty of knowledge too. She attractively presents to the children convincing characters, real or imaginary, with many desirable qualities. Her style is straightforward and usually very clear. Added to her academic qualifications, which ensure that her descriptions of insects and plant life are always accurate, is a talent for setting forth facts in an imaginative manner.

The majority of her books will make the greatest appeal to children who are themselves interested in insects and nature generally. Other children can enjoy them for their sense of fun and adventure, their accounts of life in other lands, and as an autobiography of a remarkable explorer who is, fortunately, also a children's author.

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Illustration by G. Fraser from *The Realms of Gold* (U.L.P).

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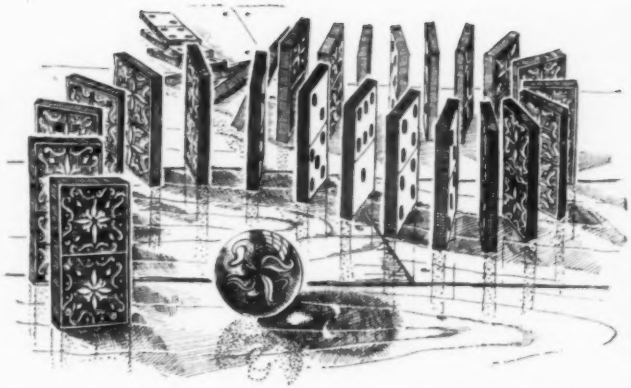

Illustration by P. Boston from *Children of Green Knowe* (Faber).

"Pinocchio", "Cuore" and other Italian Books

By V. MELEGARI.

ON July 7th, 1881, there appeared in Florence, in the Children's Newspaper edited by Ferdinando Martini, the first instalment of *The Story of a Puppet.* It was signed "C. Collodi" and told of a puppet fashioned from a piece of cherry wood by the skill and patience of an old carpenter. This was Pinocchio, the most vital and human creation in all the stories devised for Italian children, and in this way, in the pages of a short-lived publication, was born an immortal character.

Carlo Lorenzini, his author, was born in Florence in 1826. He took the pseudonym Collodi from his mother's native district. There is, in fact, a small desolate region of that name among the Tuscan hills. When Pinocchio appeared Lorenzini was 55 years of

age and so he achieved his masterpiece in middle life after having produced a whole series of children's books which had had varying success. In his early years he had worked for various magazines and had written short stories, comedies and novels. He had translated under the title *A Book of Fairy Tales* the famous *Stories of Mother Goose* by Perrault, and had also composed a book of short readings — *Little Johnny* — which recalled, not only in its title but also in its educational purpose, the *Johnny* of Parravicini. This was followed by *Little Johnny's Travels, Minuzzolo, The Magic Lantern, Happy Stories* and then, last of all, *The Story of a Puppet.* The first instalment of the adventures of Pinocchio had a great success and when publication of later instalments was suspended for some time letters poured in to the office of the newspaper from all parts of Italy. The children wanted the continuation of Pinocchio's adventures at all costs. Collodi delayed in meeting their demands for, to tell the truth, he did not know himself how to bring his lively and mischievous hero to a satisfactory end. Then at last he reached a solution: Pinocchio would meet a long series of adventures and then, with the help of the blue-haired fairy, he would become a little boy like all the rest. And so it happened: Pinocchio became the leading character of a famous book because, after publication in the Children's Newspaper the story appeared in book form under the definitive title of *The Adventures of Pinocchio.* That was in 1883: seven years later, in 1890, Carlo Lorenzini died and it was said then that the "Daddy" of all Italian children was dead.

Today, the whole world knows Pinocchio. He has been taken into possession, not always successfully, by the cinema, the radio, television, the theatre and by

the writers of children's books, who have poured forth hundreds of continuations of Collodi's book. Literary articles, books, and translations without number have also appeared. In the criticism of Collodi's book are to be found judgments of remarkable depth : it has been written, for example, that "Pinocchio is not only a symbol — he is a problem complete with its solution. The work of education has always been considered within the restrictive framework of a fundamental course of studies. Collodi's *Pinocchio* represents in the field of children's literature what the *Critica della Ragion Practica* represents in philosophy — the victory of self-government and liberty. *Pinocchio* tells us that education is creative : it draws from the void, from the inorganic, from the mechanical. But that which appears to us as empty, lifeless, mechanical possesses within itself its own reality of existence."*

In 1954 the erection of a monument to Pinocchio such as the English have given to Peter Pan was discussed in all Italian newspapers. There was argument about an ultra-modern design for the statue : there was controversy too, about the proposed site of the statue. Some would like the monument to be erected in the district of Collodi, others in that of Pinocchio near Ancona. Some maintained that Lorenzini took the name of this place for his puppet while others held that the author used the word "pinocchio" according to the Tuscan use and in that case it would signify "pine-kernel."

All this discussion, while adding nothing to Collodian criticism nevertheless reveals the ever-lively interest of Italians in this book on which they form

* Pietro Mignosi: "Il Preguidizio della letteratura per l'infanzia" in "L'Educazione Nazionale." anno VI, n.2.

themselves generation by generation as also no less do other nations. In 1953 Collodi was translated into fourteen languages and was the most frequently translated Italian author of the year. Moravia follows him with translations into thirteen languages, Dante into ten and Boccaccio into seven.

Pinocchio had not yet appeared even in his serialised presentation when the second Italian masterpiece appeared — the *Cuore* of Edmondo de Amicis. This man, who was to become one of the most popular children's writers, was born in Oneglia in Liguria in 1846. Military life, which led to active service in the war of 1866 against Austria, inspired him to write a book of sketches which he called *Life in the Army*. He travelled widely in France, England, Spain and Turkey and described the countries he had visited in many interesting books. He also wrote agreeable memoirs and graceful poems. His death came suddenly in 1908 but for twenty-two years before it his book *Cuore* was running triumphantly through the world. The exact date of its publication was October 15th, 1886. It was a great day but already, in 1878, De Amicis had written to Emilio Treeves, the publisher : "All my spirit has awakened and my book will be entitled *Cuore*. It is my life : it contains all the secrets of my manhood, the intimate struggle which I have waged with myself for years in order to make myself a better and a happier man. It holds my thoughts of every day, my feelings of every hour, my home, my religion, my youthful dreams, all my treasures." Thus began a long period of uncertainty, bitterness and delusions : De Amicis wrote and revised but without finding himself satisfied. At last, on February 16th, 1886, he wrote to his publisher : "I am in a stream of enthusiasm which is carrying me

away : I have no longer any other thought, any other desire than my *Cuore.*" A few months more and the book was a reality.

Cuore is in its outward structure no more than the diary of an elementary schoolboy, who relates the incidents which have occurred in the course of the school year. Nothing could be simpler, apparently. Yet, in reality, *Cuore* is a unique book, not to be paralleled. As the sincere expression of a pedagogy which sees in the school the principal formation of character there will not be found any to surpass it. For this reason all nations have adopted it as their own, because it reflects the loftiest human ideal under every clime — the foundation of a better society.

Various charges have been made against this book : some accuse it of sentimentality, some of positivism, some of religious indifference. But none of these criticisms has damaged its popularity which continues unbroken. Young people still find in it the purest spring of action and confidence for a better and brighter future. This is the very thing of which the world stands in need.

Around Lorenzini and De Amicis at a greater or lesser distance, revolve the rest of the contemporary writers. Some are already pervaded by the teachings of the two giants, others are still bound to the old tradition. There is Antonio Stoppani (1824-1891), who contributed to the formation of the national self-awareness with his famous book *The Beautiful Country,* in which he describes the beauties of Italy. Paolo Lioy (1834-1911) was an illustrious scientist and the author of beautiful books of popular science. Renato Fucini (1843-1922), a writer of remarkable gifts, a Tuscan like Lorenzini, was the author of many

delightful books for old and young, filled with the liveliest characterisation of countrymen, townsmen and patriots ; Luigo Capuana (1835-1914), was a prolific writer of novels and realistic short stories : among these are *Scurpiddu, Cardello,* and his numerous collections of fables.

This survey may fittingly end with mention of a group of writers who seem to dominate two centuries but belong by their training and their outlook rather to the 19th Century. They include Augusto Alfami (1844-1923), author of *Italian Types ;* Jack la Bolina (pseudonym of Augusto Vittorio Vecchi, 1843-1932), the author of numerous books with a salt-water atmosphere ; Emilio de Marchi (1851-1901), translator of La Fontaine's fables into Italian verse and famous novelist ; Ildefonso Niere (1853-1920), an elegant Tuscan writer and narrator of folk-lore ; Virginia Treves (1849-1918), Ida Baccini (1850-1911), Emma Perodi (1850-1918), Sofia Bisi Albini (1856-1919), and Anna Vertua Gentile (1850-1926) who comprise the group of women writers.

Still two names separate us from the 20th century. One is Luigi Bertelli (*Vamba,* 1858-1920), to whom we owe especially a children's paper, *The Little Sunday Magazine,* and, among books, *Ciondolino, Long Stories for Children who are never satisfied, The Story of a Nose,* and *The little magazine of John Burraca,* a rather lively satire on old systems of popular education.

The last name on our list is Guiseppe Ernesto Nuccio (1874-1933), a realist like Capuana and, like him, enamoured of that lowly, poverty-stricken world which is forever in quest of a brighter morrow. Nuccio's best books are *Tales of the Golden Shell, Turi, Picciotti e Garibaldini, Il Reuccio degli Ucelli.*

So we leave the age of masterpieces and enter upon the dreadful era of two world wars. Or, if you prefer it we enter the era of the great hope — world peace. For juvenile literature it is the end of the classical period and the beginning of the contemporary venture.

Illustration by M. Gardiner from *John and Mary's Fairy Tales* (Muller).

Illustration by P. Fortnam from *Folk Tales of the Channel Isles* (Harrap).

The New Books

FOR CHILDREN UNDER ELEVEN

GREY, J. *Party games for young children.* Illus. by Doritie Kettlewell. 93 pp. 8¼ × 6. Ward Lock 6/–

The introduction declares the scope of this book to be wide, but it is really rather a small and very poorly organised collection of games, which seem to have been entered at random. There is no division by age groups, and not always a mention of age range for a given game, similar games are widely separated in some cases, and passive and active games scrambled together, while most of the indoor games would be quite suitable outdoors. No music is given for the singing games, and no variants, apart from an occasional mention in the description, and some descriptions are confusing, some even incomplete. The general impression is that the collector is rather bored by the idea of children's parties, or at least believes her audience to be — granted the simpler a party the better it often may be, but it is hard to believe any hostess would be a success who takes so little interest. The drawings are gay, the material better presented elsewhere.

KENT, M. *The Tinker-Tailor story book.* Illus. by C. Barden. 155 pp. 7½ × 5. . . Harrap 7/6

Another run-through of over-familiar and never very adequate material, pointless little episodes of village-life and frilly fairy-land, with next to no plots and those usually quite flat. Irritation grows in reading, not against the author with a living to make, but against the adults who care so little about children's reading that they continue to buy such lifeless reading-matter as "all right for the kiddies," as though anything *is* but the best. The children accept it for want of anything better ; small wonder their reading interests often stay undeveloped.

LATHROP, D. P. *Bouncing Betsy*. Illus. by the author. Oblong boards. 9½ × 5¾. Woodfield 8/6

The Thirties were the Silver Age of the American picture book. Of the lovely books which appeared in the years before the war, none was more charming than those with exquisitely soft black and white drawings by Dorothy Lathrop. They had meticulous zoological accuracy, a sure sense of balance of masses, and an almost Chinese skill in selection. One of these delightful books now appears in an English edition which does full justice to its charms.

This is a picture book, in which first and most attention is claimed by the drawings of farmyard and wild animals. Unfortunately, however, it also has words. As picture books go, the words are quite good. The thin story is told with good taste and some sense of style. But there are a great many words; and the very young child who will like both story and pictures will tire long before the adult reader has laboured through the 150 or so words on each page. This is a disadvantage: it is one shared by almost every book for the youngest children.

For all this criticism, the very warmest welcome to this distinguished visitor from the States. Now may we have a vintage Bemelmans and Lathrop's *Animals of the Bible*.

PERKINS, L. F. *The Mexican twins*. 191 pp.
PERKINS, L. F. *The Puritan twins*. 181 pp.
Both illus. by the author. 8 × 5¼. . . . Cape 6/–

Two new additions to the "Twins" series, the first originally published in 1915. Succeeding years have made books of this sort more socially conscious and their authors have gone much deeper, but the Perkins' books still please children, perhaps because they give a sort of child's-eye view, cheerful and naive. The Mexican twins' father leaves home for several months to take part in the peons' Revolution, and the Puritan twins' father buys a negro boy (who is made a comic figure) and shoots at an Indian with little provocation, all with a matter-of-fact attitude which is rather restful to the adult made over-sensitive to every implication, and which is not too dated to give to junior readers. On a slightly older level, it might be frowned upon, but there it seems acceptable. The author's own drawings were always one of her greatest assets; the plates seem rather worn in the new edition, but the pictures are marked by the same simple (if not entirely understanding) benevolence as the text.

FOR CHILDREN FROM ELEVEN TO FOURTEEN

ALLEN, E. *How many miles to Cyprus?* Illus. by J. Allen-Ballard. 228 pp. 7½ × 5. Methuen 9/6

Careful, inspired characterisation, excellent talk, pleasant doings, accurate backgrounds, easy to imagine events like swims, donkey-rides, campfires, mixed with excitingly extraordinary things like bandits and monasteries in the mountains — make this a very good children's book. The story is of a boy and a girl who spend part of their holidays (they live in Cyprus) travelling about with an old man who is collecting data for a history of the island. The children are excellently drawn, they have nice, inconsequential conversations, but it is the adults in the book who show that Mr. Allen knows what he is doing when he writes for children. All are odd enough to be of interest to the young — it is the average sensible grown up who is so completely lacking in any interest to them. Here all are caricatured into 'characters' who cannot fail to please — the gentle Colonel, the fiery historian, the travelling puppet women, bandits, monks, police. Interesting all the way, and nicely shimmering with the heat and colour of summer in a south country. Perhaps this is the way a guide book for children should be written; smells, foods, faces, scenes of present day Cyprus, plus enough of its past history to interest.

The illustrations in their chunky way, although not always exactly close enough to the text, are nice in themselves and add the right atmosphere. But why a pink and blue insipid jacket for such an unsoft and ungirlish tale?

ARMSTRONG, R. *Danger Rock.* Illus. by L. Leszynski. 182 pp. 8 × 5. . . . . Dent 8/6

Very good indeed, as one would expect from the winner of a Carnegie Medal. Mr. Armstrong writes sea stories that catch with truth both the fascination and the dread, both the wonder and terror that are all mixed in man's attitude to the sea. In *Danger Rock* he tells of an apprentice who is jerked into bearing huge responsibilities, how he deals with these, and how tough trials develop his character. The tramp steamer on which, owing to illness among the crew and various re-shufflings, he is Third Mate, hits a submerged iceberg. When the two lifeboats get away, he and five other members of the crew are left behind by mistake, and have to make the best of their escape in the tiny jolly boat. The main adventure then

begins and the young hero finds himself in charge of the long hazardous voyage to safety, grimly holding them all on to the last edges of their lives. We follow not only the physical dangers and practical difficulties but also the mental upheavals and rivalries between those few survivors, when they are cramped together in the open boat and when they land for a time on a desolate small isle. It is a book that will prove gripping to any reader. A book of brave adventure, sparely, vividly told, to stir the most sluggish. A book to recommend to any too well looked after, warm, well-fed, landlubberly child. There are good, strange, absolutely suitable illustrations.

ATKINSON, M. E. *Unexpected adventure.* Illus. by S. Rose. 187 pp. 8 × 5½. . Bodley Head 9/6

The wrapper promises "good fun" as well as excitement in a story which has neither, as it is largely concerned with frustrations and unpleasantness. Good little Sugar (improbable name) accomplishes most, but that is at the end of the book and off-stage. Fricka, who lends her name to the series, is an ungracious and unappealing girl, and more or less forces the other three to devote their short stay in the country to tracking down a gang of country louts who steal and kill cats for their fur. A gloom hangs over all, the decaying house in which the grisly operations are held, the rotting cat corpse, an old man who falls down stairs and dies, his grandson who is bullied by the gang, the unsuccessful hours the children spend in trying to catch the thieves, who are always referred to as THEM. Twice only can we leave the spot ; on the first Sugar is almost drowned, and on the second the children find a wishing well which looks as if the owner "might have tipped *anything* into it." The writing is clear and the grammar correct on the whole, but there seems to be a good deal of writing about nothing, and the final impression is most unpleasant.

BOSCAWEN, L. *We live in Lemon Yard.* Illus. by R. Kennedy. 256 pp. 7½ × 5. . . Collins 8/6

An eldest boy writing about the pretend-games, explorations and excitements of a family group must be measured against Oswald Bastable, who is an easy winner as opposed to John Hollingbury, whose mis-spelling and misconstruction of words and information is tedious rather than inspired, and sometimes may be the true author's errors. She does give an

understanding portrait of a lonely girl befriended by the four Hollingbury's, but the other children are more type-cast and the adults vague. It doesn't help that the mother addresses her children as "chaps" and that they themselves use the terms "shame-making" and "envy-making." This last is applied to their luck in seeing Margaret Rutherford walking in Hampstead, for the story has a frame-work of their search for objects of interest in their new neighourhood, Miss Rutherford and Sir Ralph Richardson being two of the objects, wall-plaques and the like providing more. There is also some heavily manufactured excitement concerning an eccentric explorer-lecturer's attempt to force a non-existent secret from an author-explorer idolized by the children, which ends in some highly unlikely melodrama, before petering out unconvincingly. Even the illustrator seems bored with the proceedings, for the usually reliable Richard Kennedy has shown the children without wraps a few paragraphs after they put them on. Altogether a contrived affair, soon to be forgotten.

BOWEN, B. *Bill takes the helm.* 190 pp. 8 × 5¼.
Burke 8/6

A very gratifying story with one of the nicest young ambassadors to arrive from America for some time. A boy of outstanding ability and promise, Bill finds his future altered by his mother's death, for she has asked him to take his little sister to live with their grandmother in Yorkshire. The grandmother and her sea-threatened home are extremely vivid, and Bill is properly appreciative, but his passion in life is boats, and on his first morning he injures a local boy in an attempt to claim a salvaged boat. The accident darkens all his subsequent dealings with the Flamborough fishermen and their sons, until he justifies himself, more by grit and hard work than by his final rescue of some of his opponents. This, and another formula — the neighbours combining forces to save the grandmother's home — are the only routine features of a fresh and vigorous book, and even they are used to great effect. A heart-warming story maintaining a high degree of interest, this should appeal to boys and girls alike.

BURTON, D. *Daring to Live.* 176 pp. 7½ × 5.
Burns & Oates 10/6

A good idea, not well carried out. The sub-title is 'Heroic Christians of Our Day,' and the book consists of short biographies of ten Good People who were also men of action

and colourful heroes. They are Louis Pasteur, Joseph Dutton (of the lepers) Pius X (Saint and Pope), Michael Carlier (monk and French soldier of the line in the 1914 war), Miguel Pro (martyred in Mexico), Georgio Frassati (a young Italian student who was an inspiration to his fellows and died of polio), Maximilian Kolbe (Polish hero of a concentration camp), Hugh Dormer, (young Englishman, soldier, special agent), Karl Leisner (German priest), Paddy Finucane (fighter pilot). Nine nationalities are represented, and each of their very dramatic stories is outlined. The trouble about potted heroes' lives however, is that the bare outlines are inclined to look as unreal as cartoons. We need all the filling in to show that these remarkable men were also human. Great men are belittled by this author's slightly pious journalistic style. In many ways it is an appalling book. The imaginative child may well be more impressed by the horrors and cruelties that these men endured, than inspired by the bright heroism that got them through. Fewer and fuller stories would, I believe, have been better. But it was a good idea, and better done this way than not done at all.

CATHERALL, A. *Jackals of the sea.* Illus. by G. Whittam. 184 pp. 8 × 5. . . . . Dent 8/6

A sequel to *Ten Fathoms Deep*, this story is being serialized in "The Boy's Own Paper," and a very good serial it should make, for the suspense mounts steadily to an end which is inevitable, but satisfying. A straight-forward yarn, it sometimes lapses into the traditional jargon of routine adventure stories, notably in the threats that pass between heroes and villains, but the background is novel and interesting — the *Bulldog's* crew take the tug up the coast of Sumatra to rescue a floating crane — and the hero, son of the *Bulldog's* owner, makes up for any absence of individuality by the quality of his determination. The crane changes hands several times, and becomes quite a familiar and fascinating mechanism, and both black and white characters are gratifyingly competent, as seamen, salvagers, and enemies. The master-mind behind the villainy seems to be making crime pay fairly well, but perhaps that is just to allow him to try once more the hopeless attempt to outwit Captain Hudson and Jack. The prescription for knock-out drops is all too simple to be made so accessible ; otherwise this is a most recommendable light thriller.

CLARKE, P. *Smith's Hoard.* Illus. by C. Leslie.
185 pp. 8 × 5. . . . . Faber 10/6

The author makes no hesitant steps at the beginning of this story. She enters at once into the atmosphere of a holiday train journey being made by two young people, and the motion of train and conversation has an echoing and insistent rhythm that is closely felt. But this intimacy is not maintained. The author becomes a little more aloof and a little more crowded out as events push in and the story enters into the category of competent but more prosaic works. There is throughout however, no lack of sustained interest. The pattern is intriguing enough and the intrigue is enriched by the historical and archaeological information which supplies the excuse and inspiration for the invention. An unpleasant antique dealer, a bewildered farm labourer, buried Celtic treasure and four interested young people are the props of the tale, and while one of the young people sometimes appears to be surprisingly clever, he is not unbelievably so. There is an element of ghostly mystery which remains unsolved to the end, and this gives a happy imaginative touch to the otherwise more ordinary turn of events. The chatty style of the first person rides smoothly and easily along and is not used to hide too many faults.

CLEWES, D. *The adventure of the Blue Admiral.*
192 pp. 7½ × 5. . . . . Collins 8/6

Like its predecessor, *The Adventure of the Scarlet Daffodil,* this is a sane and simple junior mystery, making no great claims, but providing a useful and attractive shelf-filler for the children whose liking for anything labelled "mystery" sometimes leads them to more dubious material. Fifteen-year old Peter Hadley again tells the story, in which not only the children but their elders (a welcome point) play an active part in discovering the reasons for the theft of a worthless painting, and then the whereabouts of a treasure. The children are not made too clever, even though they find the treasure before their policeman father, family relations are natural and easy, though the youngest boy is a bit of a brat, and several rather gross coincidences are allowable since the information they yield could and would have turned up by ordinary, and slower means. Nobody is really wicked, but the mystery is effectively spun out. The situation of the old lady who owns

the picture and needs the treasure is one with great appeal for children (elderly recluse in crumbling mansion), who will also enjoy the Hadleys' advent in her life. Light and likeable.

COLLINGS, D. K. *Folk-tales of the Channel Islands.*
Illus. by P. Fortnum. 192 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$. Harrap 7/6

Publishers should really be more careful in their application of the term "Folk-tales," which is certainly not correct in this instance, though each of the dozen stories incorporates some belief of the Channel Islanders. Some of them simply deal with a handful of modern children who visit a local witch, etc., in which case the belief is usually carefully explained away, or at least interpreted in a modern light, and one tale plays with the idea that the stone figure of La Bellouse might have been carved by a little prehistoric boy named Twinkle, which is neither good folk-lore nor good pre-history.

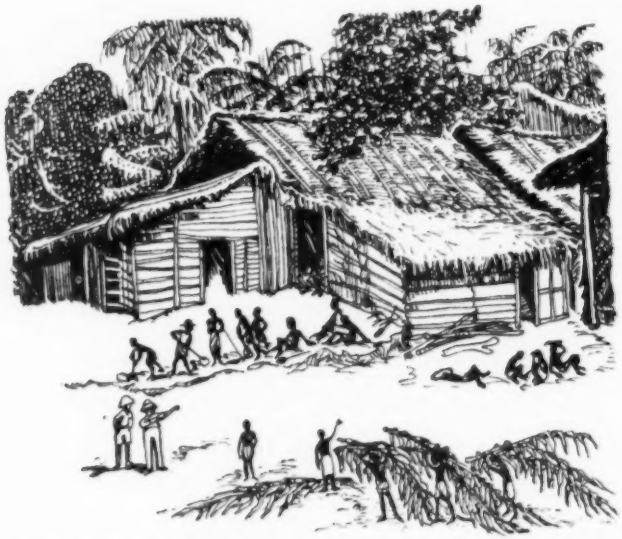

Illustration by A. Walford from *The Story of Albert Schweitzer* (Methuen).

Despite the unnecessary softening-down of some of the stronger elements of folk-lore, there is a surprising stress on death and funerals. It is hard to condemn the author, who obviously loves the landscape, but she should have shown equal respect for the legends instead of burying authentic material in her own embroiderings, some of them oddly old-fashioned. The stories themselves are often fundamentally very fine, and well worth collecting, but this is not the way to present them.

It is the illustrations that succeed ; few illustrators today are so adept at catching other-world expressions as Peggy Fortnum, and her human faces are as good as her fairies, her choice of scene admirable — it is a pity such work should seem doomed by the short-lived quality of the text.

CRISP, F. *The Treasure of Barby Swin.* Illus. by R. Powers. 180 pp. 7½ × 5. . Bodley Head 8/6

Jim Grover can hardly be said to have been born under a lucky star. His employer, harbouring a pirate secret, dies of fright at the reappearance of the dreaded Barby Swin. Jim, creeping away in the hope of at least avoiding suspicion of complicity in his death, is shanghaied by the lurking Barby only to be tossed overboard in home waters and picked up by a whaler bound for southern whaling seas. Wrecked in a whaling chase, he is saved by the appearance of a deserted vessel on which Barby makes his reappearance after a fruitless expedition in search of the treasure. Returned home, Jim finds himself accused anyway of the murder of his employer and extricates himself with great difficulty from the charge.

Meanwhile he finds the treasure — but Barby Swin finds *him.* Shanghaied once more he is rescued by the intervention of a dim-witted but faithful seaboard friend, but the treasure is lost overboard. There is no luxury ending for Jim — back he goes to sea. Perhaps it was a good idea to write a sea-faring yarn without yielding to popular ideas of plot and fortune, and so far as the writing goes Mr. Crisp continues to improve.

ELLACOTT, S. E. *Forge and Foundry.* Illus. by the author. 76 pp. 8½ × 6¾. . . . Methuen 8/6

It may be, now, 6,000 years since metals were first worked by Man, yet the whole content of this 'outline' is a reminder of the unending ingenuity of Man in his pursuit of improved methods of extracting and shaping metal to his purposes.

Indeed, the accounts of really modern methods of steel working and iron founding occupy only one-third of the book and the rest is a long tale of constant improvement and discovery. What is most admirable in the presentation of these developments is the unsparing use of illustrations so that no vital point goes unexplained by visual means. That there is practically no duplication of text and figures shows the advantage of having author and illustrator combined into one person. A list of books by Miss E. N. Bewick, A.L.A., and an index, round off this detailed and fascinating account.

FIDLER, K. *The Deans solve a mystery.* Illus. by Reg. Forster. 157 pp. 7½ × 5. Lutterworth 6/–

The sub-title of this book might be : "Or How to Make a Child lose Interest in Reading," and yet some children might find a mild sort of interest in it, even after discovering the title to be a cheat. Events are few, characters interchangeable, and a small accumulation of developments, held off till the end, could excite no-one but the characters. One of the heroines behaves inexcusably badly throughout the greater part of the book, *pages* are devoted to dull details of keeping some surprisingly dull chicks a dullish secret, and a school play is successfully produced without so much as a whiff of grease-paint coming across. No wonder some young readers think they want comic-strip excitements instead of books; the Deans would produce apathy in any child with real or potential reading appreciation.

FRANCE, C. R. *Discovering sailing ships.* Illus. 128 pp. 8 × 5½. . . . . U.L.P. 6/–

Sample from page 24 — "They had two types of ship, Hugh," explained Mr. Carr. "Their merchant ships 'i' . . ." and footnote one says, "*See p.* 103 *for a picture. For the trading voyages of Greek and Roman ships, see p.* 72.' This sort of thing continues throughout the first section of this disappointing little book, doubly fictionized as frequent "scenes from the past" are conjured up and commented on later by Mr. Carr, all in a curiously old-fashioned tone, rather like an early schools broadcast. The second section gives a brief historical background, with much poetry included, each period being closed by rather unappealing suggestions of Things to Do, and the whole followed by a glossary so sketchy as to be no help. On page 100 the book really has something to offer

for the next pages contain pictures of various types of boats, sails and navigation instruments. But this material is available, usually with more explanation, in other books, and the present effort is unlikely to satisfy readers of any age, and might even dampen their ardour for sailing-ship books.

KNIGHT, F. *Mudlarks and Mysteries.* Illus. by P. Jobson. 263 pp. 8 × 5. . . Macmillan 10/6

The theme here of local robberies, suspicious characters and clever detecting children is a well worn one but the author has so trampled upon it that it becomes somewhat hidden beneath the fresh and quite colourful overlying material. The geographic background of land surrounding Chichester Harbour is authentic and happily nostalgic to the sympathiser while the occupational background of 'messing about in boats' provides a healthy and informative interest. The style develops from the use of the first person medium into a racy and chatty outburst and is a little too smooth and slick for credibility. The conversation of children is just not as clever as this and the characters of all concerned in the tale, while differentiated from each other, have little to afford them any individual staying and living power. A light but commendable entertainment in an attractive format.

LAMOND, H. G. *Towser.* 270 pp. 8¼ × 5¼. Faber & Faber 12/6

The unsuitable lap-dog name hides the identity of a tough, energetic, unsentimental sheepdog who works for his living on the vast sheep stations of the Australian outback. His master is an undemonstrative, few-worded, sheep man, who trains his dog from puppyhood upwards, treating it with a harsh justice that will appear odd and even unlikeable to readers used to the more humble attitude of Englishmen towards their dogs. The Australian author clearly knows sheepstations, the month to month work that goes on there, the men who do it, the way they talk and live, the country they ride over. He describes it all sincerely, but with his small curt vocabulary and tendency to use words like 'commence' and 'large' instead of 'begin' and 'big,' he does not write well. The main danger of this book, however, is that it is not what it pretends to be, a dog story; any child expecting this will be let down. Towser's life history is only a thin thread on which a documentary of a certain side of Australian life is hung. The picture

given is vivid and seems authentic, flies, heat, open spaces, bare country, hard work. Raw writing, perhaps, but like it or not, it tells of something real.

No pictures, is the clue that this book was not really designed for children.

O'BRIEN, P. *The road to Samarcand.* 255 pp. 8 × 5½. . . . . Hart-Davis 10/6

A horror comic between boards, an odd choice for this publisher, who has also oddly chosen to give it a dignified format with no illustrations to lure the type of audience for whom it seems planned. Another oddity concerns the time of writing, for the author's whole attitude and language would seem to date from several decades ago, and yet the Abominable Snowman and a few other modern items have been inserted. Perhaps Mr. O'Brien was harking back to the dear dead days of the penny blood, when all Chinamen, Swedes, and professors were comic, men were men, and bloodshed spelled excitement? At any rate, here is the same rather stupid boy hero, always being knocked about by friend or foe, with one uncle who is a hard-drinking-swearing-shooting he-man, and another who is an archaeologist. The latter develops enough manliness to say things like "I'll double-cross the bum galoots," (the double-cross resulting in "the Russians rolled headless on the ground.") The present international situation is happily ignored in these ante-bellum caricatures of Orientals, and the Death of a Thousand Cuts is flourished again. The little party of whites, with faithful Chinese attendant, covers an impossible amount of territory in impossible conditions, leaving a trail of corpses behind — all in self-defence, of course, but we are allowed to revel in the details of each extermination. But for all the varied types of killing, and a succession of accidents and incidents, there is little real excitement in the book, and certainly no humour, despite wise-cracks and much regimental horse-play. The idiom is that of "popular" America, the whole book a glorification of crude adventure and manslaughter (though the author carefully deplores this at stated intervals) — and yet the book is probably already on the shelves of most of the junior libraries in this country though they were founded to put children in the way of something better, *Big Tiger and Christian,* for instance, a real book and not a disguised comic.

REID, M. M. *All because of Dawks.* Illus. by Geoffrey Whittam. 238 pp. 8 × 5½. Macmillan 10/6

A minor work of uncommon soundness, giving a pleasurable account of summer doings for those awkward "in-between" readers around 9-10 for whom so much that is mediocre in this generation has been published. This book shares a few of their failings, some of the plotting is a bit weak, the outcome is obvious chapters in advance, and the six-year old who owns the jackdaw, Dawks, behaves like a much younger child. But all is saved by the author's sure touch with her children, and her nice easy humour. All the characters are agreeable and their conversation rings true — like the father's remark in the struggle to set up a camp-site, "My hat, to think we do this for pleasure!" — and keeps the reader chuckling. The children's secret codes are a little too elementary, but their projects are normal enough, working to replace a damaged bicycle, discovering a smuggler's cave and a very pleasant young American's ancestress, and helping a boy new to their Irish neighbourhood to escape from his mother's coddling. A welcome "fill-in," unpretentious but genuinely amusing. It is to be hoped however that such a capable authoress will soon give us a really "durable" book.

SCOTT, J. M. *White Magic.* Illus. by J. Kiddell-Monroe. 191 pp. 7½ × 5. . . Methuen 9/6

'J. M. Scott's descriptions of the Arctic conditions on Greenland make you shiver' says the publishers' blurb for this new book by an Arctic expert, but that is just what seems to be missing in this otherwise admirable tale of adventures in Greenland. Only on rare occasions is the coldness emphasised. Most of the time one feels the atmosphere is nearer that of a winter sports resort and the temperature seems unlikely to interfere with normal life. The two children who accompany their father and friend on a visit to the Arctic in search of Viking relics become involved in an epidemic of influenza which constitutes a threat to the indigent Eskimo almost equivalent to the horror of radio-active sickness among us at home. Their adventures as assistants to the adult Europeans who are too few to cope with the menace alone are feasible and human, and the background of Arctic life and country (with the qualification mentioned above) is skilfully and colourfully drawn. Miiss Kiddell-Monroe's illustrations are as usual much more than adequate.

SHIPTON, E. *The True book about Everest.* Illus. by F. S. May. 142 pp. 7½ × 5. . Muller 6/6

Eric Shipton, now Warden of the Outward Bound Mountain School in Eskdale, Cumberland, probably knows Everest better than any other man in Europe. He has been on five expeditions to the mountain and it was his reconnaissance in 1951, that discovered the route which took John Hunt's party to the top.

This book, which gives the impression of being as authoritative as its title suggests, surveys the various attempts that have been made to climb Everest. It is written in clear, simple prose; it shows — in discussing the death of Mallory and Irvine in 1924 or the near-failure of Lambert in 1952, for example — the insight of a mountaineer; it tells a young reader why, as well as how, men have tried to climb Everest.

Mr. Shipton's subject is assured of a strong appeal. Books about Everest are becoming so common that before long we can expect one of the "How to do it" series to contribute its volume. But of several general books about Everest which have been published in recent years for young readers, Mr. Shipton's seems to me the best. It is a pity that the drawings which illustrate the text vary so much in quality.

SYME, R. *Hudson of the Bay.* Illus. by W. Stobbs. 128 pp. 7½ × 5. . . Hodder & Stoughton 7/6

The subject of Mr. Syme's book is probably best remembered for the dramatic and inhuman fate meted out to him and a few companions when they were set adrift by mutineers in the bitter Arctic seas in 1611. It is less generally remembered that Henry Hudson had spent his last five years in unsuccessful attempts to find a north-west passage and another thirty in sailing the known seas. It is on these last five years that the author concentrates and makes the most of the rather limited dramatic opportunities which Hudson's explorations afford. He does not attempt to glamourise a character who had neither the verve of Columbus nor the penchant for discovery displayed by Captain Cook, but was rather dour in attack and in his fortunes. There is some vagueness about Hudson's age. Mr. Syme sends him on a first voyage at sixteen in a year in which other sources indicate he must have been at last twenty-five, though the actual year of his birth is admittedly doubful. The omission of any sort of map is a more serious offence, hardly atoned for even by the numerous and lively illustrations.

TINBERGEN, N. *Bird life.* 62 pp. 9¼ × 7. O.U.P. 8/6

Fourth in Oxford's "Visual Series," and less useful than those by Peter Hood, largely because the writing is so faulty, some sentences seeming meaningless and contradictory, and many so awkwardly phrased as to distract attention from the meaning. The subject is unfailingly interesting, as are most photographs, but neither is seen to advantage here, the physical lay-out leaving much to be desired. Several diagrams are unsatisfactory, and there are too many generalizations and misleading statements for a book which attempts to promote interest in the layman. Suggestions for study are given, but the book does not bear comparison with most of the other bird-books now available.

Dent's "Children's Illustrated Classics"—

TWAIN, Mark. *The adventures of Tom Sawyer.* Illus. by C. W. Hodges. 247 pp. 8 × 5½. 8/6

TWAIN, Mark. *The adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Illus. by C. W. Hodges. 338 pp. 8 × 5½. 8/6

MARRYAT, Capt. F. *The children of the New Forest.* Illus. by L. Edwards. 325 pp. 8½ × 5½. 11/6

All three welcome additions to the series, Mark Twain's being particularly well illustrated. It is interesting to see how well an English artist can capture this very American background, catching Huck to the life, and providing some most evocative scenes of the Mississippi. Some of the drawings are sketchy, but the over-all effect is first-rate, and few illustrators have made Tom look half so likeable. The whole format is pleasing, and this edition would seem the best, English or American, now in print. The Marryat has, of necessity, a more solid look in spite of the larger page-size, but is also attractive. The illustrations are more sketchy and seem likely to date sooner, but the colour plates give a good impression of New Forest country.

WEAVER, S. *The Stranger.* 255 pp. . Collins 8/6

A highly satisfactory book in every way, which should be a real "find" for readers who like a sense of accomplishment and purpose mixed with their fun. Ireland has often provided a good background, and here the landscape and people have genuine charm with nothing of the stage about it. The two children are equally natural, their conversation easy and convincing, without having to prove its childishness by an over-

use of slang and silliness. They are a pleasant pair, and their wish for golden treasure is normal enough, but it is turned, as if by the influence of their spend-thrift, rack-renting ancestors, into more selfish channels, and only straightened by the brief but effective guidance of the mysterious Stranger. There is moralizing, but presented in just the right degree, and without it one doubts whether the final solution to the various mysteries and problems would be so moving. There is no sense of strain or underlining of the philosophy, however, for this is a sunny, lighthearted book, coming to a fine close when, the villainous tinkers out of the way, the secret of the deserted family mansion solved, and everyone's future neatly assured, young Edmund comes into his inheritance.

WEISSENSTEIN, H. *John and the chess men.* Illus. by Kert Werth. 150 pp. 7½ × 5. Phoenix House 9/6

Presumably *someone* likes essentially non-fiction material disguised as fiction, or publishers would not persist in printing it, but it seems likely that many of the purchasers of this example will regret their choice too late. It is an appealing looking book, but both chess-enthusiast and fiction-lovers will probably be disappointed. A bed-bound boy encounters twin chess-players, who introduce him to the rudiments of the game and chess notation, and his growing interest helps him to regain his health. But too much time is spent explaining the simple things, and too little on the more complex, so that another book would be needed, or better still, a knowledgeable partner An American import, it has been somewhat "translated," but given no English feel at all. Luckily, other books on the subject are available, and this item may be by-passed with no regrets.

FOR THE INTERMEDIATE LIBRARY

BERTON, P. *The Golden Trail.* Illus. by D. MacPherson. 147 pp. 8½ × 5½. Macmillan 10/6

This is the story of the Klondyke Gold Rush and the sweep of the tale is ably built up from its small quiet beginnings to its crowded climax. The narrative is clear but solid. The author sees the end and means to get there and his tramping trek echoes the countless feet of all who sought a fortune in the cold and isolated region of the Klondyke. As with all this

series there seems to be little high imaginative writing but all the facts are seriously and dutifully given while M. Berton does perhaps give a little more of himself than his fellow writers. There is a closer intimacy here with the beaten trail and an essence of the struggle is caught for the imagination. The illustrations too, in this volume, are of a finer calibre and spirit than those in companion works.

BUCK, P. *The Man Who Changed China.* Illus. by J. Woodbridge. 118 pp. 7½ × 5. . Methuen 9/6

Sun Yat-sen has become a forgotten patriot, not because he is dead but because the revolution he created is no longer recognisable in Chiang Kai Shek's Formosan outpost. Perhaps he has always played Mazzini to Chiang's Garibaldi, but the work he did in converting China to new ways of *thought* deserves recall and recognition. Whether Miss Buck's rather austere biography can do this for a modern generation depends probably on young readers' pre-knowledge of the general background of Chinese history. While the book deals sympathetically and fairly with Yat-sen's personal and public life, it gives only a vague idea of the forces and personalities against which his long effort was directed. Consequently one has a feeling for most of the book that its hero is fighting something that does not exist, though no-one could have been more clear-seeing than Yat-sen himself. Thus the dramatic tone of the story is lowered — even the furore created by Yat-sen's detention in the Chinese legation in London becomes tame. Perhaps, after all this time, the perspective in Miss Buck's book is a true one, but it is not a perspective that makes for exciting perusal. Nevertheless, it may be borne in mind that the writer undertakes a thankless task in trying to depict a *political* hero of thirty years ago for the less serious-minded youth of today. Again, some sort of map, if only in end-papers, could have helped materially to explain the territorial aspects of Chinese Imperial government.

CAMPBELL, M. W. *The Nor'Westers.* Illus. by J. Kerr. 176 pp. 8½ × 5½. . . Macmillan 10/6

This further addition to the "Great Stories of Canada" series is a lively tale but somewhat chequered in its character by a tendency to slide over and miss the connecting links of the story. This kind of treatment while permissible for adult readers may be muddling and bewildering to children. The

lively scene becomes a flashing series of disjointed film shots. There is no inspired writing here but plenty of competent work, a knowledge of all the technicalities and a breath of feeling here and there to lighten and brighten the commentary. The book is a worthy documentary giving a detailed account of the fur trade in the eighteenth century and of the North West Company and their exploration of that part of Canada. The geographic scene becomes a vital one and the reader is led to study the good end paper maps. The production is pleasing and the illustrations roughly and boldly suitable.

COOK, L. *The World Before Us.* 256 pp. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$.
Collins 15/-

This is a travel book by a young schoolmaster who worked off some of his restlessness and inferiority complex by travelling round the world on a motorbicycle. He describes not only the picture book scenes and characters of the way, but with more introversion, the effect of the ordeal upon himself. The blurb admits that the journey proceeds at two levels, it is likely that young readers will ignore the one and appreciate the other. They will read for the pleasant sating of wanderlust that one gets from even other people's travels, and for the excitement of the scrambling hurry of the journey, on, on, 'beyond fatigue and boredom lay the urge to keep moving . . .'

Mr. Lennox and his companion travelled 19,150 miles over-land on their Nortons and the linking passages by sea. The route was across Europe to Greece, Turkey, Palestine, India, Australia then back across America to the Queen Mary and home. The adult reader might find this restless, unremarkable young man a bit tiresome, were it not that he appears always so bitterly honest and often writes (particularly when he remembers to look outwards rather than into his own soul) remarkably well. The child reader will skip the adventure of the spirit for the more active adventure of the journey. For him, this starting off on a whim to travel round the world by motorbike may seem as amazing and worthwhile and as beyond the rim of possibility as the experiences of Aladdin or even the Swallows and Amazons. Lennox Cook's achievement. is surely many a boyish dream come true.

There are no photographs, save for the portrait frontispiece; small line maps mark each stage of the way.

DARBYSHIRE, S. *Sarah joins the W.R.A.F.* 187 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$. . . . . Bodley Head 7/6

One is led to believe that the author of this 'Career' book must have been a recruiting officer for the W.R.A.F. The whole reads like a long and glorious advertisement, extolling the joys of life in this service and emitting an aura of glowing cosiness with armchairs and chintz curtains at every bend of the way. There is indeed plenty of information and a great variety of scene but the variety adds to the prejudice of the picture. The mundane and monotonous which accompany every job passes quickly by, while comparatively little hard work tempers the scene. The air of the cheap novelette pervades this work as it does so many of the 'Career' books and the slight love interest is a superimposed and superficial addition.

FEARON, E. *The young stock keepers.* Illus. by G. Slater. 170 pp. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. . Lutterworth 10/6

Goodness knows what a farmer's opinion of this book might be, but to one non-farmer it seems very common-sense advice, given with much good-humour, on what it means to invest in rabbits, chickens, goats, pigs, etc. The fictional background is better adapted to stock-keeping than it was to the same characters' market-gardening, and allows for plenty of amusing anecdotes and for bringing in the experiences of friends in varying situations. Everything goes a bit too smoothly, perhaps, but the author is frank about possible problems, ("I refuse to consider laying hens as a way of making money at all" prefaces the poultry chapter), just as she is matter-of-fact about details of reproduction. The six young people have several advantages, like parents who can supply equipment as well as advice, but it is chiefly their own interest and enthusiasm that enables them to cope with both their growing stock and a market garden in after school hours. The last chapters give month-by-month advice on current work, and incorporate material on farm-education and clubs which might better have had a chapter to itself. The writing is a bit slap-dash, but the author communicates her own feeling for the work very well, and gives many amusing thumb-nail sketches of animal characters. Her attitude toward mechanization and chemical stimuli is inconsistent, but then she never pretends to be giving more than the oldest boy's first-person opinion. A very readable record for all would-be farmers, well-produced, with entertaining drawings and an index.

FERGUSON, L. *Into the blue.* Illus. 255 pp. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$. . . . . Collins 16/-

Many undergraduates, faced with a geographical thesis, turn to their own parish or district. Lionel Ferguson and four of his Cambridge friends chose Lake Tina, the source of the Blue Nile, in Ethiopia and used their long vacation for a survey of the Lake and its neighbourhood. They bought Winnie, a Ford V8 staff car for £95, "wrote thousands of letters appealing for funds and equipment," and set off.

Most of Mr. Ferguson's book is devoted to the hazards of the journey: they are of much greater general interest than the details of the survey which occupy only a fraction of the text. There is, of course, plenty of incidental information about Southern Europe and North Africa, their peoples, customs and ways of life.

But the main appeal of this lively book is in its heartening account of five young men who, with determination and humour, faced hardships and discomfort, drove Winnie through yards and yards of red tape, and travelled over 11,000 miles in less than four months.

Although *In the Blue* does not describe any blood-cooling adventures, it does show young people that opportunities for combining excitement and education still exist, if they care to look for them.

FITTER, R. S. R., and RICHARDSON, R. A. *The Pocket guide to nest and eggs.* Illus. 172 pp. $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ . . . . . Collins 21/-

Rather a large pocket would be needed for a book this size, and a well-filled pocket-book for the price, especially since the book is designed to go with the earlier book on birds. As in that first book, the arrangement is unusual and not very successful, grouping the birds by habitat and then by size. The information given for each entry is very full, but would seem awkward to find. The plates, mostly in colour, show about half-a-dozen birds each, usually with egg, nestling, and a bit of nest showing, and are crowded together in one supplement so that much cross-reference is necessary. A final key runs briefly through nesting sites, types of construction and material, egg colour and nestlings, and there are appendices on building nests, bird organizations and the new systematic order. Ring-sizes are given in the main section. This would not seem a

book for use by young people at all, and adults might be better pleased with one of the many books already obtainable on the subject.

HOBLEY, L. F. *Exploring the Americas.* Illus. by G. Randall. 76 pp. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{3}{4}$. . Methuen 8/6

The scope of this 'outline' history will probably come as a surprise to the average reader who *knows* about Columbus, has heard rumours of Eric the Red, has perhaps forgotten that there is a *South* America which Balboa and Cortez exploited, and who perhaps thinks of Frobisher, Davis and Hudson as exploring *Canada* rather than America anyway. By the time we have reached Bylot, Button and Baffin, the author is only half-way through years and years of *internal* exploration of the *Americas* until the chronicle of their progressive revelation over four hundred years is retailed. Mr. Hobley's text is quick-moving and dramatic and the very plentiful illustrations always give it point, consequently the book is never dull nor is it necessary to interrupt oneself constantly to refer to an atlas since the necessary maps appear next to the relevant account in the text. Altogether an admirable addition to this series. A useful book list by Miss E. N. Bewick, A.L.A., and a full index are appended.

LONGSTRETH, T. M. *The Force carries on.* Illus. by C. Bice. 182 pp. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. . Macmillan 10/6

This book continues the story of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police begun in *The Scarlet Force.* There is ample opportunity and powerful potential here for a strong and moving tale, but although much varied detail is present the overall magnificence of the historic pageant is missed. The scene is too pitted and shattered into small fragments to be as impressive as it should be, while in the first half of the book the author has the pompous style that belongs to narrowness and bias. He becomes more at ease in the second half where more concentrated attention is given to actual incidents within the different departments of the Force, and the list of historic facts and welter of small happenings is left behind. The style is simple and the short clipped sentences are sometimes evocative and effective. Too often, however, they give merely a jerky unpolished movement to the story. The production is good and attractive but the illustrations are weak and lacking in solidity. There is plenty of exciting history here but the young may need a more coherent and attractive presentation.

MOORE, P. *The Frozen Planet.* 184 pp. 7½ × 5.
Museum Press 7/6

This book is not really worth reviewing, but may serve to demonstrate some of the dangers of indiscriminate purchase of anything with a "Science Fiction" label. Under cover of scientific accuracy, because a few astronomical and chemical facts have been checked, the average science fiction item provides some of the most unscientific thinking available today, as well as the poorest writing. It teaches little besides contempt for our own times, and often for our own kind, and a steady diet might well make delinquency seem quite natural. Space concepts may be preserved (though space flight becomes less interesting than tube travel), but thought concepts and literary style could be used without alteration in horror comic form, and while the terms of science fiction may automatically rule out religion, there is no excuse for the complete absence of spiritual values displayed here.

The present example features some painfully callow young men, who destroy the source of an evil ray threatening mankind with madness; the reasons used on both sides are quite illogical, and the picture of life two hundred years from now is completely superficial. The boys' scorn for the twentieth century is immense, but war has been abolished only because a deadly ray makes it suicidal, and when opportunity arises they take happily to warfare, and seem well supplied with atom and hydrogen bombs. Who manufactures them, and who makes the old-fashioned clothes, and the spectacles that have to be mended with string? And where are all the women, for nothing feminine is mentioned? We do learn that national boundaries and languages still persist, and that many young men are forced to colonize the highly unpleasant planets whose attainment stands for progress, but the brave new world sounds so imperfect as to make our own despised age seem idyllic. It is to be hoped the men of the future can handle the physical production of books better than this; perhaps the publishers felt a shoddy book deserved a shoddy look?

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